

CT STUDENTS FOR A DREAM*

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and members of the Judiciary Committee my name is Eric Cruz Lopez. I am an organizational leader for CT Students for a Dream and we are members of Community First Coalition (CFC), which is convened by the CT Black and Brown Student Union (CT BBSU). Our coalition consists of a dozen grassroots and youth-led organizations fighting to reimagine public safety in our communities. The CFC recognizes that our communities must be safe first and that we must also directly address the negative impacts that police and policing has had on our communities.

As an organization run and led by undocumented young people, we stand in firm opposition to any and all legislation that seeks to criminalize young people, particularly legislation that will primarily criminalize black and brown young people in our communities. We know that legislation that seeks to criminalize young people will have a deeper impact on immigrant/undocumented youth by way of affecting their legal status and/or adjustment process. The legislation that we are in opposition to today, seeks to remediate all issues with increased policing, incarceration, and criminalization of young people even though research surrounding youth and incarceration tells us time and time again that this does not work.

As organizers in the state of CT we understand that these issues arise out of the multiple layers of inequality that CT continues to build on. A 2015 study by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York found that CT is the most unequal place in the US when it comes to income and the Sheff vs. O'Neill school desegregation case points at the continued inequality in education that students in Hartford have experienced over decades. The legislation that we are in opposition to today, does not seek to address any of these issues that are at the root of the problems they claim to want to address.

In Support: S.B. No. 387

We offer our support for Sec. 5. Specifically, we endorse the codification of the collection and reporting of data that reflects a myriad of important information of when a police officer engages any person in a traffic or pedestrian stop. However we urge the committee to strengthen the language so that police interventions in schools are collected and reported on in the same exact way. This is because we know there are thousands of police-led interventions in schools each year that go uncatalogued.¹ Furthermore, this committee should add additional language that models the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee recommendations that would lead to increased community ownership of school-based 9-1-1 call data so that students, parents, and credible community messengers can be fully aware of the reasons, frequency, and for whom police are being called to schools for.

In Opposition to H.B. No. 5417, H.B. No. 5418 & S.B. No. 365 and S.B. 16 legislation that increases electronic monitoring and/or GPS Monitoring:

We are vehemently opposed to any legislation that increases the electronic monitoring and/or GPS surveillance of youth, especially Black and Brown youth or adults in our communities. These types of technologies ***“are engineered to guarantee that a person who was criminalized in the past or present will, by design, continue to be criminalized in the future, whether or not they break any laws. Since a key feature of our legal structure is to separate out and exclude people, law enforcement oriented data-driven technologies are designed to ensure that targeted people fit into criminalized categories that justify exclusion under and beyond the law.”***²

¹ School Cops: Few Arrests? Too Many Calls?; New Haven Independent: [School Cops: Few Arrests? Too Many Calls?](https://www.facebook.com/191587517525677/videos/334421440877611) Waterbury Town Hall on Policing: Police Chief Spagnolo states 1,100 mediations for 2019-20 (six months of school): access via <https://www.facebook.com/191587517525677/videos/334421440877611> at minute 14:17

² THE INVISIBLE MACHINERY OF DATA CRIMINALIZATION, by: Puck Lo. Contributions from: Ana Maria Rivera-Forastieri, RAD (Tim Stallmann, Chris Schweidler and Billy Dee) and Dalia Rubiano Yedida, accessed via: <https://abolishdatacrim.org/en/report/full>

As an immigrants rights organization, we have seen GPS monitoring used in ways that criminalize not only those who have a GPS monitor, but also those around them. GPS monitoring in this context puts immigrant families at risk of being criminalized and their legal status being put in jeopardy, more supervision leads to more criminalization not less.

In Opposition to S.B. No. 365 and H.B. No.5418 legislation that increases support and training for law enforcement personnel to apply for detention orders for youth accused of crimes.

Any increase of support, including training of any kind for police officers to apply for detention orders will lead to an increase of youth in our community being placed in prisons or prison-like conditions.

In Opposition to S.B. No. 365 and H.B. 5418 legislation that increases the likelihood that youth are transferred into the adult criminal justice system or proceedings.

The campaign to criminalize Black and Brown youth by making it more likely they are treated as adults is one of the ways the school-to-prison pipeline is codified. These types of recommendations disregard the science of child and brain development and are seated in a formula derived from *“the superpredator myth [that] included the largest expansion in history in the U.S. prison population, which increased by more than one million between 1980 and 2000.”*³

In Opposition to H.B. 5418 legislation that increases the likelihood of children being placed in detention facilities, and the sharing of juvenile records to facilitate incarcerating children.

Under no circumstances can we or should you accept the conditions this bill creates for children. Our young people's welfare and confidential records should be protected at any and all costs. The moral outrage we have for the recommendations that potentially strip Fourth Amendment rights from children so that they can be more easily locked up, even for as little as six hours, is literally unspeakable in this forum.

It is for these reasons and more we hope this committee and its members decide to protect children and keep them out of prisons at all cost.

Respectfully,
Eric Cruz Lopez
Organizing Manager
CT Students for a Dream

Members of the Community First Coalition include: Blue Hills Civic Association, Citywide Youth Coalition, Connecticut Justice Alliance, CT Black and Brown Student Union, CT Students For A Dream, CT Voices, Hearing Youth Voices, Middletown Racial Justice Coalition, New Britain Racial Justice Coalition, Radical Advocates for Cross Cultural Education

The coalition leadership can be contacted by emailing Sarana Carter at ra@ctbbsu.com
www.communityfirstcoalition.com

Facebook: @Community-First-Coalition Twitter: @ctcarenotcops IG: @communityfirstcoalition

³ Sarah Lawrence & Jeremy Travis, The New Landscape of Imprisonment: Mapping America's Prison Expansion 1 Research Report of the Urban Institute, Washington D.C. (2004).